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Historical sketch

OF THE

MISSION ROMANDE

(TRANSVAAL AND DELAGOA BAY)



LAUSANNE

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Historical sketch of the "Mission Romande".



PREFACE

A new era has dawned for South Africa. The long war is over, and everyone looks to the future with great expectation. An enormous loan has been subscribed to cover the expenses of the war. Capitalists are investing money in new undertakings. Hundreds of young men are off to Johannesburg and Pretoria. Political England is doing its utmost to create a better racial feeling between the various white communities of South Africa, and to give the country a wise government. But what are the Christians of England doing for the colonies recently added to the Empire?

About half a million natives have been brought, together with their late masters, under the protection of the British flag. They belong to many tribes, and speak many languages. All are eager to find in the new Government help for their material and spiritual needs.

What then, we ask again, is Christian England going to do for them?

“It should found a new mission”, say some. We do not believe that such a step would be advisable. There are already several missionary societies working in the Transvaal. In the Christian work of Johannesburg almost every denomination is represented; while, in the open country outside the towns, the Berlin Mission works among the Basutos, and the French Swiss Mission among the Tonga, or Shangaan people. The ground is, altogether, pretty well covered, so that any new agency would run the risk of overlapping. We think the wisest plan would be for English Christians to throw the weight of their gifts and influence into already existing societies, which need, and would very warmly appreciate their aid.

The Swiss Mission has not hitherto looked for anything from Christian friends in England. But now that the state of things in Africa is so completely altered, it feels justified in making its existence known and in asking for help. Our hands are full. Doors are wide open before us. God has blessed our work. He has wonderfully watched over it and us all through the war. The Shangaan or Tonga tribe is waking up, and the darkness of heathenism is passing.

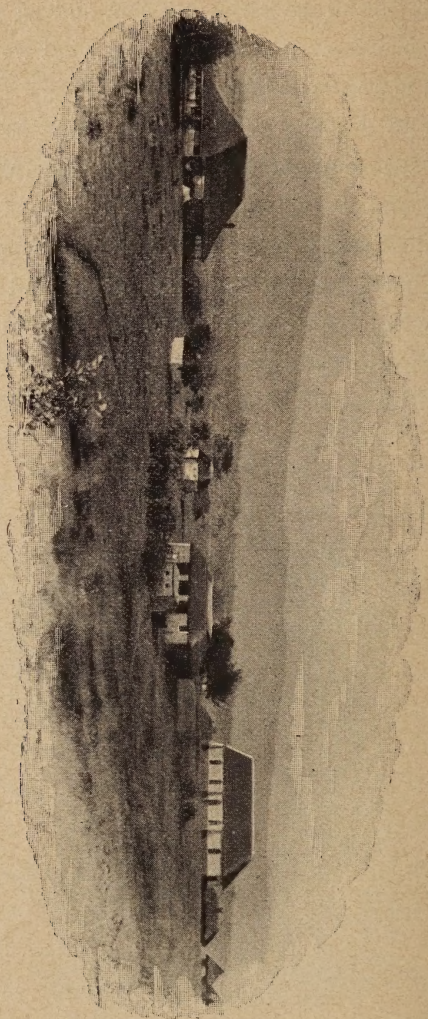
Brethren in England, unite your efforts with ours. Our churches of French Switzerland are small; they do not number 20.000 members, and yet they give nearly

£ 8000 a year to the Swiss Mission, and as much more to other societies. So we are doing what we can. But we need more funds and more men.

We trust that the short account given in this pamphlet of the origin of the Swiss Mission (Mission Romande), and of the way in which God has blessed it during the twenty eight years of its existence, may encourage many English Christians, gladly and thankfully to throw in their lot with us in our effort to win the souls of the Tongas for the Saviour, and to make them sharers with us in the benefits of a truly christian civilisation.



An African ox waggon.



The new station of Valdezia.



1. Beginnings in Africa.

As one notes the way in which God can make every circumstance tend to the advancement of His kingdom and the final triumph of righteousness, one is lost in admiration. Where the historian would only see through the maze of circumstance the natural relation of cause and effect, the Christian can clearly distinguish the over-ruling and guiding of a Divine hand, which has employed often unconscious instruments for the working out of its purposes.

The political events of which South Africa was the theatre during the earlier part of the nineteenth century are a very striking illustration of this truth. The conquest and welding together of numerous native tribes under a variety of savage potentates had succeeded the period of disintegration which had followed in the wake of European occupation. But the renewed power of these chiefs was not to last. When once the power of a chief is broken, the African native dares to take independent measures. Thus was it now with the Tongas.

This tribe, which inhabits the Portuguese coast, bordering on the Indian Ocean, from latitude 20° to 27° ,

numbers at least half a million. It had been subdued by the great Zulu chief, Manoukoci, and was, for long years, after his death in 1858, divided by fratricidal quarrels.

At last, wearied out with this internecine warfare, a small portion of the tribe, to the number of perhaps 15,000 souls, fled under the guidance of a Portuguese to seek refuge in the Spelonken district, north of the Transvaal. This part of the country is more healthy than the neighbouring Portuguese coast which has been significantly named: "The White Man's Grave", and was for this reason more suitable, as a mission centre, for the men whom God was already preparing to send forth to evangelise the whole of the Tonga tribe.





II. Beginnings in Europe.

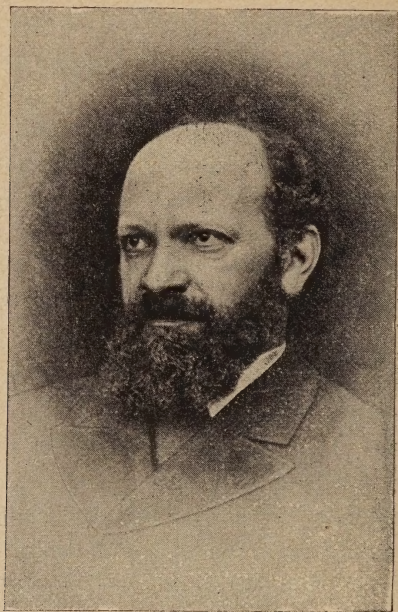
In 1869, MMss Ernest Creux and Paul Berthoud, two young theological students, who had just finished their course, received a direct call from on high to engage in foreign mission work under the auspices of the Church to which they belonged—the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud.

They wrote, accordingly, to the Synod then meeting at Lausanne, offering their services in this direction. “We are ready”, they said, “to go anywhere that you may send us—to the tropics of Africa or to the lands of ice and snow”.

The immediate response to this application was the formation by the Synod of a “Committee of Missions”, nothing of the kind having previously existed in connection with the Church; and in 1872, after further special preparation, the two candidates were lent by this Committee to the Paris Missionary Society, for work among the Basutos.

During the two years that they laboured in Basutoland, the Rev. P. Berthoud and another of the missionary staff, the Rev. A. Mabilie, were commissioned by their brethren to explore the northern part of the Transvaal, with a view to the opening of a new mission station.

After various difficulties and disappointments they found in the Spelonken district the split-off portion of the Tonga tribe which had, as we have already said sought refuge there; and which was now, from its iso-

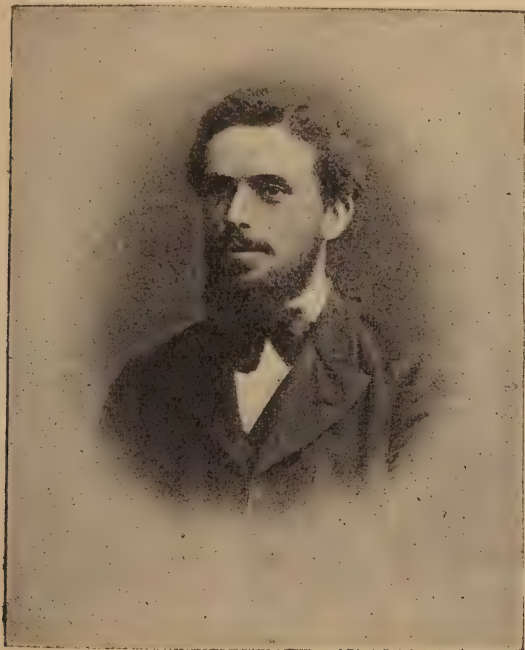


Rev. E. Creux.

lated condition, in a favourable condition for the reception of Christianity.

Encouraged by the warm welcome received from both the black and white population, the missionaries, leaving two native evangelists behind them, hurried back to Basutoland to give in their report.

A new mission centre had been opened. But the Paris Society could not, just then, undertake any fresh work. It was at this juncture that the Synod of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud solemnly resolved to take



Rev. P. Berthoud.

up an independent mission of its own. Its Committee of Missions became the *Mission Vaudoise*, afterwards known, when Geneva and Neuchâtel joined hands with Lausanne, as the *Mission Romande*. The Paris Society yielded its claim to the services of MMss Creux and Berthoud; and on July 9, 1875 these two pioneer mis-

sionaries reached the sphere of their future work. They bought a farm, and established on it their first mission station, which they called, in remembrance of the Canton de Vaud, *Valdezia*.

At first all went well. The two friends worked with enthusiasm and zeal, building houses, caring for the sick, teaching in the schools they had opened, holding evangelistic meetings. But, before long, troubles arose. In the course of the year 1876, the Boer Government, under the former Dutch pastor Burgers, forbade the two missionaries to preach the gospel to the natives; and this although they had received, on the way to Pretoria, verbal permission to do so.

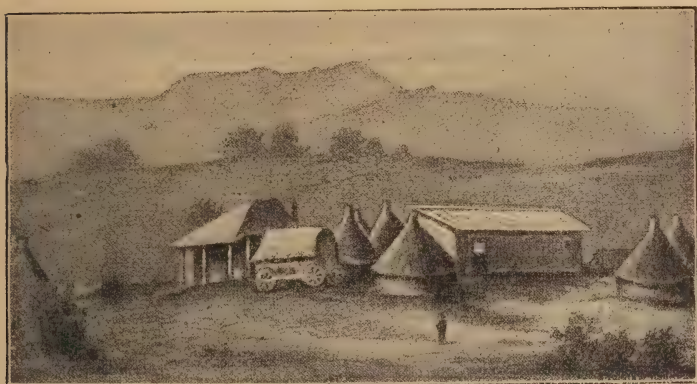
Strong in their legal right and in their calling of God they replied that it was impossible for them to submit to such an order. Whereupon the President, offended at their attitude, had them arrested and conveyed to the prison in the Marabastad district.

This trial was a hard one for these two young workers. Full of faith and enthusiasm as they were, their newly founded station was dear to them, and already full of promise for the future, and besides they had left their wives and their children there, at a time when their presence seemed especially needed.

A war was raging around Valdezia between two hostile tribes. From the mission house the ladies could see the burning of native villages and could hear the firing and the savage cries of the guerilla bands. God, however, watched over the young station and did not suffer any evil to happen to it; and at last, at the end of five weeks and a half the missionnaries had the joy of retur-

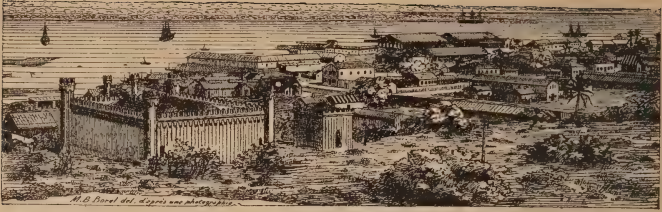
ning home. They had never even been brought up for judgement. Soon after this they had a yet greater joy—the baptism of their first convert.

At the end of 1878 they could count 80 converts. The year following they founded a new station, 12 miles from Valdezia which received the name of *Elim*, and was occupied by the Rev. E. Creux.



The first settlement of the Mission at Valdezia.

But this step forward was taken in tears. In the course of but one year, between April 1878 and April 1879 the little missionary party had need to dig no less than six graves—for Mrs. Berthoud and her three children, and for two also of Rev. E. Creux's little ones, while the Rev. P. Berthoud, broken down by illness, returned, desolate, to Europe. His post did not long, however, remain vacant. Within a few months, his brother, the Rev. H. Berthoud, arrived in the Spelonken district to take up the direction of the station of Valdezia.



Town and harbour of Lorenzo Marquez.

III. The Development of the Mission.

The successive trials by which the mission had been visited did not fail to bear their appointed and blessed fruits. They were followed by a season of quiet and reflection, and then by a new departure in the work.

In 1882, the Mission had two stations and three out stations, with three missionaries and seven native catechists. The Church numbered 215 converts and three to four hundred hearers of the Gospel; but, young and small as it was, it recognised the supreme dying command of its Master, and was to become, in its turn, a missionary centre.

A Christian of the name of Yosefa; who was travelling to the coast, arrived one day at the home of a chief called Magoude who lived seventy miles from Lorenzo Marquez. He was heartily welcomed by this chief, who earnestly desired the presence of a missionary among his people. The native church of the Spelonken, hearing this, appointed Yosefa himself to the post of evan-

gelist in the district, and raised a collection in money and kind for his support, which amounted to no less than £ 40. The outpost they had thus founded received the name of *Antioka*, in remembrance of the Christian Church of Antioch which was established beyond the borders of Palestine.

This work of extension in Africa ran parallel with



The school-building at Lorenzo Marquez.

the somewhat similar movement in Switzerland to which we have before alluded — the missionary federation of the Free Churches of the three cantons, Vaud, Neuchâtel and Geneva. It was from the beginning of 1883 that the Mission Vaudoise was known as the Mission Romande; and the development of its work from that time forth was truly remarkable.

From Antioka the Gospel soon spread to Lorenzo Marquez, where, all at once, many and sudden conver-

sions were heard of, and that in several different directions. It was felt to be essential that a missionary should be sent to follow up this awakening, and the Rev. P. Berthoud volunteered for the task, becoming thus the pioneer of the coast mission working as well as of that in the Spelonken. In 1887 the first coast station was opened, at a distance of about eighteen miles from the bay; and two years later, a second one in Lorenzo Marquez itself.

This last mentioned station soon became the centre of a really extraordinary movement. Each month the missionaries there had the joy of adding from twenty to thirty members to the roll of their church membership.

In 1893, a medical missionary, Dr. G. Liengme, established himself about 85 miles N. of Antioka, in the capital of Gungunyana, and a season of much activity followed. During the last year of the reign of this king, who is now closing his days in so melancholy a fashion on the Azores, there were as many as 1500 medical consultations every month.

But the constant insecurity of the conditions of life and work in Gaza occasioned at length a transfer of the medical mission work to the Transvaal, where the doctor laboured first amongst the coloured, and then also amongst the white population.

At the express and reiterated wish of the Dutch residents of the Spelonken, a hospital was built at Elim, at a cost of £ 5000; and here many of the sick and wounded during the war, both Boer and English, received the devoted attention of Dr. Liengme and his assistants?

The English Government, recognising the services which this hospital is called to render to the people of the neighbourhood, has lately given it a grant of £ 400 towards the relief of the sick poor who claim its aid.

To the earlier stations of the Transvaal was added in 1886 one at *Shilouvane*; in 1897 one at *Pretoria*; in 1899 one at *Mhinga*. This last is the most northerly of the Transvaal stations. In 1899, a training School for Evangelists was opened at Shilouvane. And thus was completed the fabric of our Mission.



The Swiss Mission Hospital at Elim.



IV. The results.

As to the work accomplished by our small band of missionaries in little over a quarter of a century, one can but marvel in looking back at the way in which the Lord has owned and blessed their labours.

The Mission Romande has now ten stations, besides the hospital at Elim and the Native Training School at Shilouvane. Its staff numbers 18 ordained missionaries (including two medical men), 15 wives of missionaries and 21 assistant missionaries (5 male and 16 female) : 54 Europeans in all.

Besides these, a native staff of sixty-six catechists and schoolmasters is working partly in the ten stations of the mission, partly in 48 out stations. 1850 children are now being educated, at 69 different schools.

The number of adult Christians was 3754 on the 31st December 1902. For the year 1902 alone, the converts were 455. With the addition of the pupils of the schools, we have a total of 5711 souls.

Besides all this, the founding of the Mission Romande has led to the discovery of a new language. Part of the Bible is

now translated into Tonga, the New Testament having passed into a second edition. Several other publications have been published for the purpose of initiating the natives into the mysteries of reading, geography and arithmetic. A Ronga grammar, a manual of conversation and a dictionary in Tonga, French, English and Portuguese, and two books entitled "The Baronga", and "Songs and Folk Lore of the Baronga", which are due to the pen of the Rev. H. A. Junod, have revealed to scientific Europe many treasures which would be still unknown but for the activity of the missionaries¹.

To these palpable and direct results of the work of the mission, one may



A Witch doctor.

¹ The Baronga are a branch of the tribe dwelling in the Lorenzo-Marquez district.

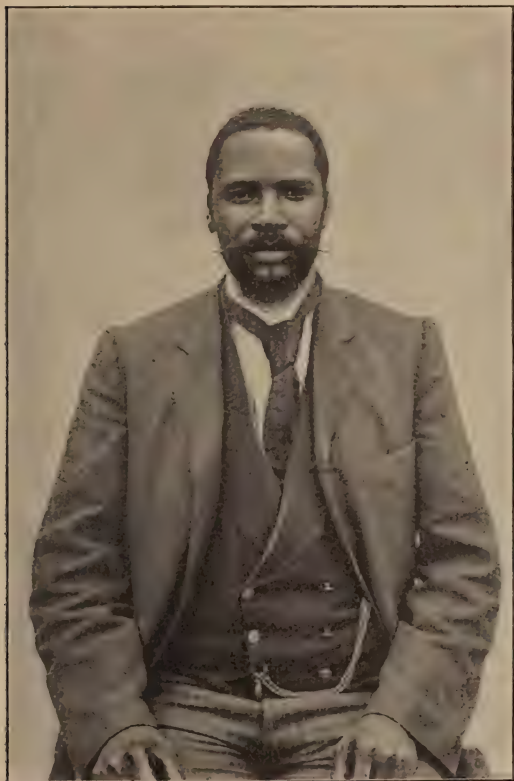
add the indirect influence it has exerted over the people as a whole. Civil war between tribes that were ever at variance is now at an end; the practice of sorcery and



Jim Shimungana : an elder of a native Church.

polygamy, of debauch and immorality, are diminished; and a civilising effect has been produced throughout the Tonga tribe, in the Transvaal at least, by such means as the use of the plough, the culture of maize for market, and the use of ox waggons for the transport of merchandise.

Such a transformation, indeed, has passed over the race, that laziness, once esteemed by them as the most



Muhlabi, the christian chief of Shilouvane
(North Transvaal).

excellent of virtues, has fallen from its post of honour; while an energy hitherto unknown is developing. The

sluggish will power of the individual is awaking, and conscience is assuming its rights.

In family life, the wife is now becoming the companion instead of the slave of her husband; parents are beginning to understand their responsibilities towards their children; and, thanks to the abolition of polygamy, peace reigns in the place of dissensions and disputes.

And in the broader community life of the tribe it is the same. The old despotic regime having disappeared, individuality asserts itself, and in place of an inert mass only galvanized by the command of a chief, we have now to do with intelligent beings who work one with another. And so it comes to pass that social life is beginning to develop amongst them. And the Gospel presides at its dawn. Witchcraft and prosecutions for debts contracted through cost of marriage festivities, which were the gangrene of society, disappear before the light of Christianity.

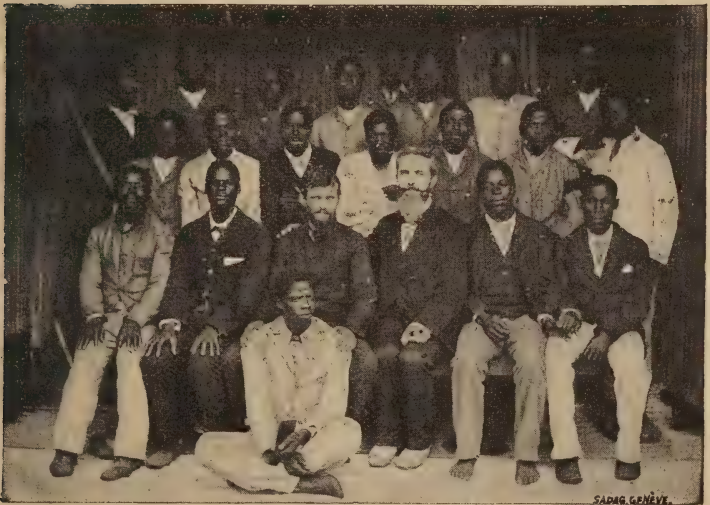
In the relations between tribe and tribe, the *homo homini lupus*¹ of the ancient world, who has always been the pattern of behaviour to christless humanity, is now yielding its place before the dictate, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".

"How is it that I trust Maaghi, and that Maaghi trusts me?" said the christian chief Muhlaba one day to a large assembly. "It is because we both read this book". And he showed the audience a New Testament. All these new converts, too, who yesterday were but uncultured heathen, begin to understand and to

¹ "Man is a wolf to his own kind".

(From a latin author.)

practise liberality. Our young churches gathered in the year 1902, as proof of their grateful appreciation of the Gospel, the sum of £ 705. And some of them, in addition to this, have defrayed the whole, or part, of the expense of building churches and chapels of their own. At Lorenzo-Marquez, where a church has just been erected at a cost of about £ 3500, the native Christians of the station have undertaken to raise one fifth of the sum.



The presbytery of Lorenzo-Marquez.



V. Conclusion.

Two words will sum up the story of the Mission:—

GRATITUDE AND TRUST

a) *Gratitude*. Gratitude towards God, who has so marvellously blessed the efforts of His two young servants so timidly sent out by a church of scarcely four thousand members. Notwithstanding the helpers who have been withdrawn during the ensuing twenty-six years of activity,— and in 1901 alone four missionary ladies heard their Master's Home call,— the little band of labourers has been steadily increased at the rate of two new workers a year.

In proportion as the work has spread in Africa, God has aroused new sympathy with it in Europe, so that from year to year the circle of subscribers has increased and offerings have grown until, in 1902, the total amounted to £ 8660.

This money came almost entirely from French Switzerland, and it represents no small effort on the part of the friends of the Mission, who, the same year, sent in for other parts of the foreign mission field the sum of over £ 8000.

b) *Trust*. We have already pointed out how, exactly in proportion to the development of this work in Africa, God has provided for its financial necessities; and that

which He has done in the past we are confident that He will do in the future.

After several months of deliberation, the Committee of the Mission Romande has taken a decision which involves important consequences. It is this, to care for the evangelization of the young people of Johannesburg. More than one half of the natives employed in the mines belong to the Tonga, or, as it is there called, the Shangaan tribe. Now the Mission Romande, though the only Society qualified by its knowledge of their language to evangelise this tribe, has never hitherto had a station in Johannesburg. But the many entreaties to take up this work that we have had from both blacks and whites of the district, on the one hand, and our firm confidence, on the other, that our God will supply all our need for such an enterprise, convinces us that we cannot, without disobedience to our commission, hesitate any longer.— We feel that we must, of necessity, carry the Gospel to these thousands of heathen whom the touch of civilization is only sinking into deeper degradation.

The burden is too great for the Churches of French Switzerland to bear alone, and its Mission must need therefore enlarge its circle of subscribers.

As, in olden time, the disciples of Christ on the shore of the lake of Genesareth were filled with amazement at their miraculous draught of fishes; but, lacking power to draw in the net by themselves, beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, even so to day do the Christians of French Switzerland ask the aid of their brothers and sisters across the Channel for this work which is too onerous for themselves alone. Over

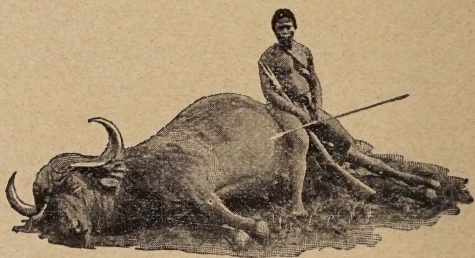
this work in the new English colony of Johannesburg, floats the flag that bears the sign of the cross, that insignia of everything that constitutes true liberty.

For the erection of the new station, we need £2000 and we are asking the Lord to send it to us by the hands of his stewards.

With the principle that lies at the very foundation of our Society's operations— never to go further than our means permit— it is of the last importance, now that we are establishing this new station at Johannesburg, that this appeal of ours should be both heard and answered.

It is with reliance then on the Lord, who has given us hitherto both workers and the means to send them out and sustain them, that we “beckon” to you in the name of from fifty to sixty thousand Tongas who, from the ends of the earth and from the depths of their moral destitution, cry out, with the man of Macedonia:—

“Come over even to us and help us”.



THE END.

STAFF OF THE MISSION ROMANDE

Stations in the Transvaal.

Valdezia. — Rev. and Mrs H. BERTHOUD, Rev. and Mrs. CH. CHATELAIN, Miss M. GRAND.

Elim. — Rev. and Mrs A. DE MEURON, Miss M. PERRET.

Elim-Hospital. — Dr and Mrs G. LIENGME, Mr and Mrs J. LIENGME, Mrs ROBERT, Miss R. JEANMAIRET, Miss V. VON LARISCH.

Shilouvane. Station and Training school. — Rev. H. A. JUNOD, Rev. and Mrs D. LENOIR, Mr J. DENTAN, Miss J. THÉLIN, Miss C. JACOT.

Mhinga. — Rev. and Mrs P. ROSSET, Rev. M. GERMOND.

Pretoria. — Rev. and Mrs E. CREUX, Mr A. BOREL, Miss L. CREUX.

Johannesburg (to be established in 1904). — Rev. N. JAQUES.

Stations in the Province of Lorenzo Marquez.

Lorenzo Marquez. — Rev. and Mrs. P. LOZE, Rev. and Mrs W. BENOÎT, Miss E. SCHLUB, Miss L. MOLINA.

Antioka. — Dr and Mrs A. SECHEHAYE, Mr A. CLERC, Miss M. PERRENOUD.

Tembe. — Rev. and Mrs L. PERRIN, Miss M. TEUSCHER.

Matutuene. — Rev. and Mrs CH. BOURQUIN, Miss L. PERRENOUD.

Makulane. — Rev. and Mrs S. BOVET, Miss U. BERTHOUD.

On furlough in Europe. — Rev. P. BERTHOUD, Rev. and Mrs E. THOMAS, Rev. and Mrs A. EBERHARDT, Miss J. JACOT.

To be sent off in 1904. — Rev. L. VAUTIER, Rev. W. AUDEOUD, Rev. H. GUYE, Miss L. URECH, Miss M. LEBEL.

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(*Sous presse.*)

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